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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THE BIBLE.

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."—2 Tim. iii. 14-17.

When this was written neither of the Gospels was in existence. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John had not been set forth. When this was written very much that now enters into the New Testament Scriptures was unknown. If it was known in several churches it was not generally known; and all are agreed that Paul did not include in the Scriptures the New Testament, but that this declaration had reference solely to the sacred writings of the Hebrews—the Old Testament Scriptures. And yet, this is by far the nearest approach to a philosopical definition of inspiration that exists in the Bible. It is one of the remarkable facts that while the Christian world has been for generations discussing the nature and validity and authority of Scripture, and especially while it has dogmatized on the subject of inspiration, the Scriptures themselves have been almost silent on the subject; the nearest approach to any precise statement is that which I have read; and that refers exclusively to the Old Testament Scriptures.

You will take notice that the declaration is very general. It is simply a declaration that in some sense, whatever it may be, the Scriptures of the Old Testament are inspired. What *inspiration* precisely meant in the writer's mind is not stated.

SUNDAY EVENING, Dec. 13, 1874. LESSON: Ps. cxix. 9-16; 97-105. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 12.1, 436, 74.

Because the words which are figurative, etymologically considered, signify a *breathing into* one, it is very easily and naturally supposed that the declaration of Paul is that the Old Testament was all breathed peremptorily into man from God, proceeding from him just as Milton's sonnets proceeded from Milton's brain, or as Cowper's poems proceeded from Cowper's brain; and yet when we come to look at the Scriptures themselves, we find that the Old Testament Scriptures were not inspirations in that sense. In Genesis we have given to us a certain amount of history; that book is a record of histories; in Exodus again we have a regular flow of history; and to suppose that facts which might be known by the ordinary use of the understanding, and parts of which were the experience of the writer himself, were poured into his mind by a direct breathing of the divine mind, is to set aside the usual methods of thinking and reasoning. When you come to the substance of the matter, it does not seem to me that you can derive from the Bible any philosophical idea of what inspiration is. We know that there is a distinction between inspiration and revelation. We know that strictly considered revelation is the making known to men of things that were before unknown—the revealing to them of things that were hidden. Inspiration has generally been defined to be either a divine afflatus which aroused in men certain sentiments or emotions, guiding their utterances, or, what is more rational and reasonable, such a divine guidance that they should unerringly state the truth, whether of history, of ethics, or of spiritual life; but from the Bible itself there is no authoritative definition or explanation of inspiration.

What, then, does it do? It simply declares that in some sense the sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament, which were in ancient times the choice food of God's people, were inspired of God,—and this declaration refers exclusively to the Old Testament Scriptures, and is made not at all with our idea of the philosophical origin of the word "inspiration" in the mind of the writer. We are seeking to run back on the word to the method and mode of divine government in bringing into existence in historic concurrence the

various books of religion which are bound together and called "The Old Testament;" but that is not what the apostle was thinking of at all. He was thinking of this advice to his young friend Timothy: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them [that is, his parents]; and that from a child thou hast known the holy [or sacred] Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Having struck that note, Paul-like, he goes on to enlarge it, and says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." It is in that direction that he was thinking of the inspiration of the sacred Scriptures, namely, not their origin but their practical uses; and it is as true of the New Testament as of the Old, although primarily applied to the Old, that they were of God in such a sense that they furnish food for rectitude, for character-building, for right conduct in this life, and for the attainment of blessedness hereafter. In other words, instead of having a philosophical and retrospective thought of inspiration, he had a practical and constructive thought of it. He asked, "For what *end* are the Scriptures inspired?" not, "In what *way* were they inspired?" He inquired, not as to their structure and origin, but rather as to their results. They are for training, for correction, for reproof, for the education and instruction of men in righteousness. They are to make a noble manhood. That is what they are for. In this sense he took them; and in this sense it is perfectly legitimate for us to say that whatever theory may obtain in regard to the inspiration of Scripture, this is a point on which we can all stand—that the word of God, as contained in the Old and New Testaments, in its representations of divine character, of divine procedure in government, of the divine method of conducting human affairs, is to direct man, to control his thoughts and feelings, to point out to him the distinctions between right and wrong, between piety and impiety, and between reverence and irreverence. In regard to all these great

fundamental elements it stands, from the beginning to the end, a book that is safe to put into the hands of men for their correction, their inspiration, and their building up in righteousness.

In that large way, then, the Bible is a book of practical life; and as such it is as valuable to-day as it ever was. It becomes, therefore, a matter of great importance, just now, when so much is being said against the Bible, and when the foundations of faith are so much shaken, to consider the right ways and the wrong ways of using this inspired book.

First, some of the wrong ways. It is a wrong way of using the Word of God to suppose that it is in a literal and philosophical sense without flaw or error. This would be a natural deduction from a generally abandoned theory of inspiration—namely, that every word and letter in the Bible was derived directly from the mind of God. That theory, if it were legitimately carried out, would bring a man to skepticism in an hour. No man can hold that theory and believe in the Bible unless he is inconsistent with himself—as fortunately, many a man is.

For example, if there be a single instance in which different writers, looking at the same facts, made conflicting statements in regard to those facts, it proves either that they did not receive them directly from God, or that God stated them in different ways, and sometimes erroneously.

Take, for instance, the inscription written over the cross of our Saviour. Matthew states it in one way, Mark in another way, Luke in yet another way, and John in still another way. It is not alike as stated by any two of them; and although the variation does not affect the subject matter, it does undoubtedly settle this question: that as the divine mind could not have been mistaken about so small a thing as the inscription written over the cross, the divine mind did not inspire or put into the minds of these men this element.

We are not to suppose that the value of the Scriptures is to be destroyed because you may find an error in a date. The Bible does not undertake and does not profess to be a book perfect in such a sense as a logarithmic table or a philosophic statement is perfect. If it is true in substance; if it is true

in regard to the great elements on which governments should stand, and households should be founded, and manhood should be built; if it is true in regard to those staple truths which pertain to the very structure of this life and the life that is to come—then it is sound. In the earliest day, in the intermediate day, in the apostolic day, from first to last, from beginning to end, it has been a safe reliance for personal character, for collective interests, for the development of the race, and for their perfection for eternity. To undertake, therefore, to stand upon incidental mistakes,—as, for instance, to say that because an event was said to have occurred in the spring, when afterwards it was proved to have occurred in the fall, vitiates the authenticity of the Scriptures,—is to set aside, not the Scriptures, but confidence in universal human testimony. We believe a man to be a truthful man though he makes mistakes and misstatements. We believe his word to be trustworthy although we find on sifting it that he sees differently at different times. The question is not whether a stick of timber has not a single check or knot in it, but whether taking it in its length and breadth it is usable, and fit for sill or bridge or roof. Now, in respect to the word of God, consider this: that it is a series of books which were written in different nations, by different men, in different ages, for different purposes, and that their collocation or juxtaposition may be called an accident. Genesis was not written with an idea that there was to be an Exodus; Exodus was not written with an idea that there was to be a Leviticus; Leviticus was not written with an idea that there was to be a Numbers or a Deuteronomy; and if you suppose that the five books of Moses were written with reference to any relation that they might have to subsequent books—to Ezra, or Nehemiah, or the Psalms, or the book of Proverbs, or Ecclesiastes, or Isaiah, or Jeremiah—you are mistaken. These books were not any of them written with the idea that they were going to make a unit, named "The Bible." They come down bringing the results of the lives of mankind, and they state the experience of the best men—men who lived under the divine inspiration; men whose light was from above; men who were representative of the moral

sense of their age; men who, in the providence of God, were called to deal with questions of personal instruction, or to stand as Ahab stood between the prophet and the Israelites, or as David stood giving utterance to sorrows in trouble, or as wise men stood giving expression to philosophy in the Proverbs. These various elements were gathered up and put together; and the marvel is, not that in putting them together there are here and there minor discrepancies, differences of dates, and the like. Though these are trifling errors, they are errors such that one could hardly put in an extravagant claim for the accuracy of the Scriptures; but when you take the larger view, that the Bible is a book of truths which respect fundamental life and fundamental distinctions; when you consider that it is a book which never goes wrong about pride, about lust, about vanity, about submission, about obedience, about reverence and about love; when you bear in mind that its teachings shine brighter and brighter on these subjects from beginning to end, what a contemptible criticism it is to say that the vehicle of such truths is faulty here and there and elsewhere!

If I had sent to me from out of Italy a precious statue, representing, in exquisite form and proportion, some eminent and worthy theme, do you suppose I would throw it away because, on examining the box in which it came, I found that there was poor stuff in it, or that the packing did not suit my ideas; or if I found that the feet were mouldy; or even if it was proved to me that one thumb was a little bigger than the other, or that one toe was out of proportion? We should say that he was the veriest fool who did a thing like that—if we were not too polite to utter such a word.

So we should look at the Word of God, considering its scope; considering its origin; considering through how long a period its elements were collected; considering that its office was to gather together the best thoughts and the richest experiences of God's people in different ages and nations, and to present them in such a form that men might, looking back, use them on the principle of common sense—for every part of the Bible implies that men have common sense,—an implication which, in our day, we should hardly dare to make.

It was written on that theory, and must be interpreted according to that theory. When we consider its minute structural and vehicular elements, mistakes amount to nothing; and for a man to stick on them is to damage his own credit for good sense, and not the Word of God.

If I take logarithmic tables and make calculations with Babbage's machine (it is a shame that a machine should do more accurate work than the brain which made it; the brain makes mistakes, and the machine does not; but still the brain is better than the machine)—if I take these tables, being a navigator, and calculate from them, it is a misfortune if I find an error in one of them; but would a single error vitiate them? If there were so many errors as to lead to men's running their ships wrong, they would be vitiated; but if average experience shows that in nine hundred and ninety-nine instances out of a thousand they are perfectly safe to be trusted, though there is here and there a trivial miscalculation, they are not vitiated.

Now suppose it shall be shown that a prophecy is in the New Testament applied, according to ordinary methods, to one event while in the Old Testament it is applied to another and very different event, what then? Does it vitiate the great substantial elements of truth in the Bible, its moral discriminations, its structural uses, and its relations to time and eternity? It does not touch them. Oh that men would bring as much common sense to the Bible as they find there!

Then it is a wrong way of using the Bible to suppose that all parts of it are alike useful, and that men are to read it all, and a great many times, with a kind of superstitious notion that it must be all taken in, as being a sacred book, and as necessary to be taken wholly by every man.

If I took a chart, with sailing directions, and were running a ship between Liverpool and New York, I should study that part of the chart which referred to the North Atlantic Ocean, and should endeavor to make myself familiar with all the soundings of the coast in that part. I might cursorily look at other parts; but I should do it only for purposes of general information: my business would lead me over a given track, and I should bestow my attention upon that track.

Now, this book is a chart; it is a guide to men; and each man is to take out of it that portion which suits his particular need. It is to adapt itself to the wants of each individual.

"Well," it is asked, "do you say that a man should not begin with Genesis and read it all through?" I say that occasionally a regular reading of the whole of Scripture is useful; but the moment a man says, "I *must* read it. I feel conscience-stricken because I have never read the books of Jonah, of Daniel and of Ezekiel: I somehow always fall upon the Psalms or the Gospels when I read, and I feel guilty"—why should you? I do not suppose that there is anything sold in Fulton Market which is not good for some people at some time; but I never feel that it is my duty to begin at one end and eat right straight through everything that is there. I have no doubt that almost every one of the remedies which are found in a proper apothecary shop are useful for some ailments and under some circumstances; but does any man suppose that he must take medicine by the shelf? It is not expected that a man will take the catalogue in order when reading the books in a library of a thousand or ten thousand volumes. In such a library there are many books which perhaps are not used more than once in a lifetime; but I do not denounce a library because half the books in it I have never read, and never expect to read.

A young man at Harvard University in selecting a book from the library took the first volume on the lowest shelf; and the registrar said to him, "My friend, perhaps I am better acquainted with what will suit you than you are." "Oh," said the young man, "I intend to read the whole library through, and am going to begin at the bottom"!

Some men feel a good deal so about reading the Bible. There are those who boast, "I have read the Bible through once a year for ten years." Yes: well, I have known men that read it through annually for ten years who knew less about it than other people who never looked at it. Probably they have read superstitiously, or without the first idea of what it means. It has not occurred to them that it is a book of food, that it is a book of medicine, or that it is a book of

education, and that it is not meant to be read consecutively of necessity, but adaptively, nutritiously, remedially. If it is so read people must pick out portions which supply their own particular want. For instance, I very seldom read Revelation except for purely imaginative purposes; but an African girl, who was full of sensuous imagination, and rejoiced in just such a picturesque, glowing, vague mode of representation, said, "The only part of the Bible that I like to read is Revelation. I like to read that because I can understand it." That which is a stumbling block of critics to her was food. Wings, horns, beasts, trumpets, thunders, lightnings, sheets unrolled, visions—the realm of such things was where she got her nourishment, such as it was.

Some men find but one or two books which are helpful to them. Some men almost make their nest in the gospels. Some men read the Pauline writings more than any others in the Bible. Some men prefer the Epistle to the Hebrews, which is not Pauline. Some men choose the historical parts of Scripture. Children like the stories. Blessed be God for the stories of the Bible. How many Sundays have been saved to me by them!

The Bible is a book so large that you can walk in it as one walks in a Park, going through it a hundred times without crossing his own track. It is adapted to youth, to middle age, to old age, to men in prosperity, and to men in adversity. When a man is all alert with vigor and strength and thrift, does he want those Psalms which are requiems? But let woes fall thick and fast upon him, so that he feels that he is a mark for the shafts of sorrow and affliction, and then see if he does not flee to those Psalms. In the joys of prosperity they had no voice of comfort for him; but now they are his refuge for consolation. There is no mood of mind and there is no contingency of life in which men, if they go to the Word of God having knowledge of it, shall not find something to lift them up and console them. You may cut the New Testament to pieces by jangling criticism, and destroy faith in the gospels, but if you bring the Bible to men as a book that supplies the soul's need, then the sadnesses of life, the sorrows of life and the hopes of life will bring them to the

light that is in it; for of all books it is the most marvelous in its sense of manhood, in its sense of the actual unfoldings of life, in its sense of the divinity that is in universal affairs, in its sense of the relation of this life to the other, and in its sense of spiritual purity and sweetness in human character. It is a source of trust and of joy to those who are sinful, and even to those who are cast down. The recuperative power of the Bible wonderfully transcends that of any other book which was ever written even by those who have drawn their elevation and inspiration from it.

It is a great and grievous wrong in reading the Word of God to read it as a controversial book. That there may come times when as the least of evils it must be used in a controversial spirit I do not deny; and yet it is a calamity then. Just as in times of war houses are fortified to keep off the enemy, and ramparts are run through orchards and gardens, wasting those things which are most beautiful in times of peace, because in the emergency everything must give way to the law of force for offense and defense; so there may come times when even the sweet and pleasant places of the Word of God will resound with the din of battle; but it is the greatest calamity in the world to have the associations of God's word in your mind associations of warfare. To have been brought up as I was with this continually dinging in one's ear—"Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints"—is a misfortune. It so happened that *contending* was a grace that was very strong in my nature, and it grew stronger during my early life, and it suited me. Many have the grace of contention. If the Word of God is for the purpose of contention, I am a disciple, and so are thousands and thousands of men. But consider how sweet is the tone of the Word of God itself. Consider the life of Jesus; his childhood; his relations to his mother; the beauty of his affections; his simplicity and humility. He never entered upon the ministry in our sense of the term. He refused to take orders. The church to-day in making a man a deacon sets him apart, as it were, from his fellow men. When a man is made a preacher some badge of distinction and separation is put upon him. He is lifted up into a place above and differ-

ent from that in which other people stand. But Jesus, while all such official distinctions and separations existed in his nation, absolutely refused to take one of them. He joined himself to the common people, and made himself one of them, and obliterated all lines that divided between him and them, —so much so that the Pharisees made it a bitter gibe that he ate with publicans and sinners, descending to the lowest forms of association. Consider how beautiful were his sympathy, his gentle judgment, and his revulsion from hypocrisy and cruelty and selfishness and oppression. Consider how, clear down through the whole course of his life, he was led by the Spirit of God, blossoming more and more, and growing more and more lovely, to the end. And then consider the unwritable tragedy of his death. Who ever shall fitly describe the forty days that closed the earthly residence or the earthly labor of Christ? No man's mind can compass it. The depth of it was such as no plummet ever will sound. Its elevations are such that only a seraph's wing can reach them.

Now, to take this benign life, this exquisite history, this affiliation of the Divine with universal human want, this nature that formed heart-loves, and loved in the name of the Father of all, and brought the Spirit of heaven to earth, shedding gracious influences among men as clouds shed rain upon the fields, every drop being a bounty—to take this and tear it into texts, and ram it into your guns, and fire them into Calvinists, high or low, or into Unitarians and Universalists; or to make every text a sword or spear or arrow with which to attack those who chance to differ from you—how it is to discredit the Bible, and to set aside every proper use for which it was created! And yet there be multitudes who think they know a great deal about the Bible because they have chewed it into pellets, and made heaps of them, so as to be ready at any time to get at their opponents on any doctrine, any experience, or any ethical question. The Bible has been cut up into weapons of war; and men think they are using the Bible properly when they are using these. So it has come to pass that under the dominion of theologues for whole ages the only use of the Bible has been to find missiles; whole ages have passed away without nutrition from this

source. The church would have swamped and gone down if it had not been for the poor widows; if it had not been for Bible readers who read from the heart; if it had not been for the suffering and needy who cried, "O God! comfort me in mine affliction and in my poverty." It has been sinners that have saved the church. Souls that have felt weighed down toward perdition, and have stretched out imploring hands to God, using the Bible, have kept that book in practical power, while theologues were weaving systems out of it, and pulling it asunder, and making it pugnacious. It has been preserved in being used by the great heart of humanity that needed it for food, and for medicine, balm, cordial, to assuage sorrow and grief. When you tell me that the church has preserved the Bible, I tell you that the Bible has preserved the church ten thousand times over. When you say that the church has saved the world, I say that the sin of the world has saved the church. The wickedness and want of men, the crying of their souls to God, and his answering through his Word—this has been the salvation, and this will be the salvation, of the church.

When, therefore, science is bringing up various questions affecting the Old Testament, and condemning it as not being the best book of astronomy, nor the best book of geology, nor the best book of geography, nor the best book of ethnography, and all the other graphies, what if they prove that? Is any science likely to come up that will give us a benigner view of God than the Bible presents?

Here is a book that has guided the world. At its breast men have sucked as the child sucks at the breast of its mother; here is a book that men have read in caves, and forgot the caves; here is a book that men have read in prisons, and forgot but that they were in palaces; here is a book that childhood has loved to read, and that old age has supported itself on; here is a book that every conceivable sorrow has stayed itself upon; and shall we set it aside because on questions of fact it may be convicted here and there of less than perfect knowledge? It never set out to be infallible in that respect. It never professed to be without flaw. It never pretended that it did not contain a mistaken phrase.

But, ah! *it is profitable for instruction in righteousness.* Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are efficacious for the salvation of the soul. The Bible is that which men in their emergencies need. Go through that book with me and I will find you a great many cases where in the history of men there has been craft, cunning, falsehood; and I will show you that the Word of God states the thing simply and plainly, just as it was, neither exaggerating nor palliating; but point out to me if you can, in the Bible, any casuistry, any blinding of conscience, any dimming of the understanding, or any attempt to tarnish the honor and take away moral sensibility. Search the Word of God through from beginning to end, and you will find it to be a book that intones manhood; that gives the noblest views and conceptions of life; that makes men patient under burdens, and hopeful under difficulties, and lifts upon them the light of the eternal world, and inspires them with the feeling that they are sons of God.

Those nations that have the Bible the freest, and whose common people have read it most, are the nations that in modern days have taken hold of all things that improve life, strengthen society, adorn character and prepare men to go out of this life in the fervent hope of another and better life.

Of course I must leave a vast amount of ground untrodden. I will this evening pursue the thought no further; but I do not stop quite yet. I think there is for very obvious reasons a much less use of the Bible than there once was. In the days of poverty and in the days of the unfruitfulness of the printing press, libraries were not common; but to-day the poorest man may own books. To-day papers and pamphlets, as well as books, fall thick as snow-flakes everywhere; and there is so much to read that everybody is overwhelmed with reading. Nobody catches up the whole. However much you may read, you leave ninety-nine per cent. drifting away from you to one per cent. that you avail yourself of. Then there is a great fruitfulness of books derived from Scripture, and expository of it. The supply of reading matter in that direction is enormous. Our Sunday-schools swarm with books. In my boyhood I had three or four. Now every

child has his pick from eight, nine or ten hundred—which are not a tithe of all that are published.

These are some of the reasons why there has been a growing discontinuance of the reading of the Word of God; but there is no substitute for God's word. It is the best book in the whole world; and after ages and ages and ages, when ten thousand times more books are written than have been written, you will not be able to get along without the thing itself. There is a peculiar flavor to it. It contains the best things in the best lives, the history of the best hours of the best men, and the best experiences of those best hours, through four thousand years. These experiences and histories are enshrined in the Bible. From it you get a knowledge of universal humanity which you can get from no narrow interpretations. I perpetually turn back from the scholastics to the Bible itself. It is more than commentaries; they muddle it. It is thought that they are useful, and they are; but they are useful in our day on the same principle that Layard was when he exhumed buried cities. They were overwhelmed, and he dug them out again. The passages of the Bible are buried six feet deep in old commentaries, and the business of modern commentators is to uncover them once more.

Consider in the Word of God its earliest histories. Consider those exquisite poems in prose—Ruth and Esther. Consider those matchless lyrics of the sweet singer of Israel, of Asaph and other psalmists. Consider the Proverbs, which one might take for a cud and chew on all his life, and not be done with them. Consider the grand statesmanship of the old prophets. Why, I am disgusted when a man thinks, as he reads Isaiah and Jeremiah, that his business is to see whether what they said came to pass. These were moral statesmen. Geniuses of rectitude were they, that rose in times of distemperature, and bore witness for truth and right. Magnificent men they were. Their heads were lifted high above the age in which they lived. Then consider the Gospels. I should as soon think of walking by proxy in a garden, I should as soon think of sending another man to court a maiden for my wife, I should as soon think of wishing a man to show his friendship by eating my dinner for me, as I

should think of taking in the place of the New Testament the commentary of any critic, or anything else. It is the thing itself in its matchless beauty and simplicity and adaptation to every want and feeling of the human soul that I need.

So, then, if there be any of you who have been disturbed by the criticisms which are being made; if any of you are concerned because the idea of inspiration in which you were educated is exploded, take this conception of the Bible: that it is a book for universal humanity. Select from it what you need. Feed yourself with it. Take it as nourishment for the reason and the imagination. Take it as that which the spiritual nature needs for its strengthening. Take it understanding that inspiration was given for doctrine, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness. Use it as you would bread, or remedial agents; and using it thus, bear witness if it does not approve itself as from God. Though it is not blustering and arrogant as an authority, your life will feel it, and your moral sense will recognize it.

Are there not here many young men who are ashamed of the Bible? Are there not many of you who have brought it hither because your mother wrapped it up and laid it away in your trunk among your things? And now that you have come into different circumstances and into a different atmosphere, are you not ashamed to be thought reading your Bible? O young man! never be ashamed of that which has been the stay and the comfort of your father and mother. He is dishonorable who ever points scorn or ridicule at your most precious affections—at those sacrednesses of the household in which you have been reared.

Pluck out that book. Let it be the man of your counsel and your guide. I do not tell you to have a superstitious fear that you have sinned because you did not read a chapter in the Bible on Monday, or Tuesday, or any other day: but this I say: Let a man who would cleanse his life do it by taking heed to the Word of God, making himself familiar with its moral discriminations, and saturating himself in its truth.

Are there not many of you who have revered it, and

attempted to live according to its precepts, but who, alas! have been overwhelmed by business, or have been surrounded by other associations and influences, so that for a long time this voice has been silent? Your Saviour is buried in this book, and for years there has been no resurrection to you. Here walks to-day, in a four-fold vision, the benign and blessed Jesus. Here to-day Paul, that noblest of gentlemen that ever lived, who touched the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of every conceivable delicacy of feeling and courtesy of affection that was inspired by the love of Christ, walks and speaks. Here is a retiring place for sorrow that would weep unseen. Here are the tonics for weakness. Here are the glasses through which faith may look and discern invisible things.

Ye mourners, ye desolate, ye orphans, ye oppressed, ye men broken in hope, ye bankrupts, too old to begin again, ye misrepresented and persecuted and afflicted, ye great army of suffering humanity, if ye have forgotten the word of God, and turned aside into the desert and arid ways of this world, come back to your father's God. Come back to the Book in which you were instructed when you were children. And forget not from whom you received those things. Your fathers—where are they? Is your life leading you to join them in the company of the just made perfect?

I present this Book to you, not because I am a minister, but because I am a man. I present it to you not by the force of any ingenious plea, but because I have known human life. When the waves have been huge, and the night has been dark, there has been a Jesus revealed here to me, walking in the night on the sea, and giving calm amid the thunder of the waves and the roar of the tempest.

Are there those who have suffered the exquisite pangs of mortification? There is balm for them. Are there those who with unutterable anguish have overhung their children dying? There is comfort for such. Are there those whose heaven has been black, and whose hope has departed, and who have thought themselves doomed to destruction? I tell you, there is a daylight even for such.

I bring to you this Book that has been my counsellor, my

comfort, and my food. It is unspeakably dear to me, from all the associations of my life. I rejoice in it because my father walked through it, as his father walked through it, and men walked through it to remote generations. It is a precious Book, not because poems say so, but because my soul says so; and I could present you no better gift for the holidays than this Book, with a spirit to live, in the innermost recesses of your heart, not in bondage to the letter, not in fear of the text, but in sympathy with the teaching, and to make it the man of your counsel, your guide, a lamp shedding light upon your path. Thus let it become a most precious blessing to the head and heart of every one of you.

Will you not go home to-night and look up your old Bible? Oh, is there a novel that comes out which has such novelty as the Bible would have to some of you if you were to read it? Will you not go home and open it? You may find inscribed in it your own name, or your father's, or your mother's. Perhaps you will find that it has been read more in some places than in others. Will you not look along the edge and see where it has been thumbed and turned, and where it was that those who gave you this precious legacy dwelt most frequently? Their feet beat paths, as it were, along the recesses of the Word of God. Will you not look at the marks made by your own hand, and remember when you made them? Will you not revive something of your own life by restoring to its place and to its honored functions this long-neglected Word of God? For your own sake, and, if you are parents, for the sake of your children, and for Christ's sake, be ye rich in the Word of God.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

THOU hast heard our prayer, our Father, and thy Spirit hath been with us through all the hours of the day, thou hast granted us strength and health, and thou hast breathed peace and consolation upon our hearts. We thank thee for this day of rest that stands as an island amidst beating storms of the sea. This one day of all the busy seven is a harbor of peace; and we thank thee that thou hast from age to age saved it, and made it sacred to things pure and spiritual—to things pertaining to our everlasting life. We rejoice that thus there is a standing-ground, a place of assembly,—one day filled with most hallowed associations. We thank thee for all our culture, for all our childhood associations, for all our knowledge derived upon this day. We thank thee for thy word; we thank thee for all thy proclamations of truth made from it; grant that as we grow older we may not abandon the faith of our fathers, nor their hope, nor their Saviour, nor their instruction.

May we work in the light of thy truth, and rejoice in thine ordinances. Yet may we be delivered from idolatry; from worshiping the instrument; from seeking to develop the outward instead of the inward life. We pray that thou wilt grant us the privileges which were enjoyed in the past, and which are ripening the world and preparing it for a more glorious future. We beseech of thee that thou wilt save all those who are beginning life from doubt, from unbelief, from apostasy. Deliver them, we pray thee, from all the snares, and doubts, and difficulties that are around about them. Give them a true sense of this life, and a true sense of the life that is to come. Give them faith in thee. Grant unto them that divine influence by which they shall unerringly be led in all the ways of life.

We pray, O Lord, that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all who are present here to-night—upon each severally as thou seest that he needs. Not what we wish, but what we need, grant unto us. Teach us to pray wisely; and grant that our prayers may not be supplications alone. May there be communion, and thanksgiving, and rejoicing in them. May we be brought near to thee as children are brought near to their parents.

If there be those in thy presence who have never learned to pray, grant that their hearts may pray before their lips know how to utter words of prayer. May their thoughts go silently up to God. May they open their inward life, their innermost thought, to thee and before thee, that thou mayest give them light, and healing, and new life.

Grant to those who are burdened and under afflictions the consolations of thy grace. Grant to those who are in doubt and darkness the guidance of the spirit of truth. Give honesty and considerateness to everyone, so that he may ponder the things which belong to his highest interest.

May we be delivered from levity and from want of earnestness. May everyone feel what is the responsibility of a true manhood.

May everyone, whether he be in darkness or in light, in joy or in sorrow, in peace or in perplexity, still feel how supremely important above all transient experiences are the truths of the life which is to come—for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal. May we remember the counsels and declarations of God, and may we not count our present afflictions to be worthy of consideration as compared with the eternal weight of glory which awaits those who are faithful to the end.

We pray that thou wilt grant, especially, that the young who are now beginning life with a fair prospect, with an open field before them, may remember their God and their fathers' God, and that they may walk securely by walking according to thy precepts. Deliver them from selfishness and from that conceit which is leading them away from thee.

May there be more who shall be led to take the sickle and go into the harvest field. Multiply, we beseech of thee, thine inspiration to everyone. Grant that the truth may everywhere be known and believed, and wrought into human laws, into institutions, into the hearts of men universally. At last may thy Spirit rule in all the world. So may the glory of the Lord fill the earth.

We that speak to-night commend ourselves to thy will; and we commend to thee those that listen. We ask thee to go with us to our households. Bear peace and safety to every dwelling. Wilt thon prepare us for the duties of this week. May the Spirit of God, and the inspiration of the hope and faith of eternal life, go with us, and lighten our tasks, and direct our way, and comfort our troubles, so that we may live through all the week upon the food which comes to us this day. And finally bring us where there are no days of burden, where there are no hours of darkness, where there is no load hard to be borne, and where there are no trials, unto the land of rest and everlasting peace.

And to thy name, Father, Son and Spirit, shall be praises evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON

DEAR Father, we thank thee that thou art speaking every day, and to those that have an ear to hear. The rising of the sun and the going down of the same; the coming of the wind and the hush that follows its going—these are thy voice. It speaks of thy truth and of thy bounty. Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night showeth knowledge. We rejoice in all this teaching; but we are glad that thou hast gathered together from the elect of every age joys, inspirations and experiences; that they are now as our histories; and that we do not walk in a strange path. There is no man that can know anything new. All things that can be in mortal experience have

been. We rejoice that thou hast given us thy word for wisdom, for instruction, for confirmation, for edification.

And now we pray that thy blessing may rest upon all those who have been gathered here to-night, and that they may go forth with their faith renewed, and fortified for trouble; and that they may find sweet flowers, fresh fruits, harbors of shade, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, places for rest and rejoicing. Grant that they may find thy banqueting hall, where thy banner over them shall be love.

Dismiss us with thy blessing; go home with us; and when Sundays and days and hours for us are ended, bring us where there is no time, where there are no revolving years, and where in eternal youth we shall behold thee and rejoice with thee.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit shall be praises evermore. *Amen.*

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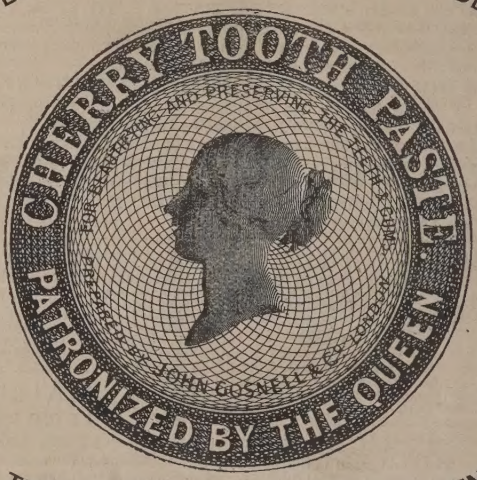
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